



OHMVR COMMISSION MEETING Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546

September 25, 2015

STAFF REPORT: California Desert Conservation and Recreation Act of 2015

STAFF: Katie Metraux, Associate Park and Recreation Specialist

SUBJECT: Proposal to draft a letter in support of the California Desert Conservation and Recreation Act of 2015

Summary

Senator Dianne Feinstein introduced The California Desert Conservation and Recreation Act of 2015 (S.414) on February 9, 2015. The bill makes amendments to the California Desert Protection Act of 1994 to improve natural resource conservation and protect recreation opportunities within the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA).

S.414 has the potential to preserve and enhance off-highway vehicle (OHV) recreation within the CDCA through the designation of five national OHV recreation areas including Dumont Dunes, El Mirage, Razor, Spangler Hills, and Stoddard Valley OHV Recreation Areas. Additionally, the bill directs the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to amend or develop new resource management plans and evaluate lands suitable for addition to Johnson Valley National OHV Area and other national OHV recreation areas.

This bill also establishes or designates national monuments, wilderness areas, a special management area, a national scenic area, an area of critical environmental concern; it specifies land withdrawals, exchanges, and acquisitions; and establishes the Renewable Energy Resource Conservation Fund. Text of the entire bill is available at www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/senate-bill/414/text.

S.414 has been referred to the Senate Committee of Energy and Natural Resources.

Discussion

S.414 expands upon the California Desert Conservation and Recreation Act of 2011 proposed by Senator Feinstein. The current bill would designate five existing OHV recreation areas as permanent national OHV recreation areas, which comprise 142,720 acres in the CDCA. These include:

- Dumont Dunes OHV Recreation Area (7,630 acres)
- El Mirage OHV Recreation Area (14,930 acres)
- Razor OHV Recreation Area (23,910 acres)

- Spangler Hills OHV Recreation Area (56,140 acres)
- Stoddard Valley OHV Recreation Area (40,110 acres)

OHV recreation will also be permitted on BLM designated routes in the Mojave Trails National Monument, Sand to Snow National Monument, Vinagre Wash Special Management Area, and the Alabama Hills National Scenic Area. In addition, the bill protects OHV recreation areas from commercial development, including mining and energy.

Under the proposed bill, the BLM would:

- amend existing resource management plans in national OHV recreation areas or develop new planning documents;
- evaluate land suitable for addition to national OHV recreation areas. These areas currently include Johnson Valley, Spangler Hills Proposed Expansion Study Area (41,000 acres), and the El Mirage Proposed Expansion Area (630 acres); and
- identify and exclude lands from consideration as OHV recreation areas that may be suitable for renewable energy development, energy transmission, and conservation.

In addition, S.414 proposes to:

- create two new national monuments—the Mojave Trails National Monument (965,000 acres), and the Sand to Snow National Monument (135,000 acres);
- designate six new BLM wilderness areas comprising 250,000 acres;
- designate BLM land in Inyo County as the Alabama Hills National Scenic Area (18,610 acres);
- designate 77 miles of waterways as Wild and Scenic Rivers; and
- add acreage to Death Valley National Park (39,000 acres), Joshua Tree National Park (4,500 acres), and the Mojave National Preserve (22,000 acres).

Commission Action

The Commission may:

1. Submit a comment letter in support of the California Desert Conservation and Recreation Act of 2015
2. Take no action

Attachment

2015 California Desert Conservation and Recreation Act Overview Map

Note: Detailed maps related to this bill are available at www.feinstein.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/desert-bill-maps

2015 California Desert Conservation and Recreation Act Overview

March 16, 2015

This map prepared at the request of Senator Dianne Feinstein

